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ABSTRACT

The relationship of the state coordinating agency with other governmental and nongovernmental agencies and with higher education institutions is considered. In addition to the primary function of long-range planning for postsecondary education systems, coordinating boards also have the important function of providing the various elements of constituency with accurate and timely information. It is suggested that the coordinating agency exists in the center of an equilateral triangle, equidistant from the three corners represented by the executive, legislative, and institutional interests. To deviate toward one corner would result in losing the respect, support, or influence of the other two elements. Various state agencies with which the coordinating agency interacts are listed, including the state board of education, the attorney general's office, and the licensing and accrediting board. Interactions also occur with: quasi-public agencies at the state level (postsecondary education consortia); individual or private groups at the state level (state affiliate of the National Education Association and organized labor); quasi-public regional agencies (Southern Regional Education Board); private or individual groups at the regional level (regional accrediting agency); public agencies at the national level (Office of Education); quasi-public agencies at the national level (Education Commission of the States); and private agencies at the national level (State Higher Education Executive Officers Association). (SW)

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STATE AGENCY RELATIONSHIPS: INCESTUOUS, INTERNECINE AND OTHERWISE

by John Porter

In order to determine the range and variety of relationships that state agencies should have, one must first make some important assumptions about the goals of the agency and other aspects of its operations.

It is commonly accepted that the primary goal of coordinating agencies, such as those we are considering, is long-range planning for a system of postsecondary education within a state. Planning, of course, becomes an exercise in futility if there are no means for implementing these plans and appraising progress towards acceptance of plans and achievement of the goals.

There exists among the states a wide variety of means for implementing plans. These range from total control by a state agency to a position of limited power--essentially that of persuasion in some states. I would argue that no matter how much absolute power a given agency possesses, it can best carry out its operations through persuasive logic, relying on exercise of power only when logic fails and emotion and political maneuvering begin to prevail.

I have given these remarks a descriptive phrase "State Agency Relationships - Incestuous, Internecine and Otherwise." I did this to emphasize the positive aspects of the "otherwise" and to dramatize the dangers of the "incestuous" and "internecine" relationships.

In discussing the various relationships, it must be recognized that although planning is the primary objective, there are other functions that agencies must perform. One of the most important is to provide the various elements of constituency with accurate, objective information in a timely fashion. The satisfaction of this goal will enormously enhance the credibility of the agency and hence, strengthen its position in the process of logical persuasion.

One can analyze in several ways the type of agencies with whom relations must be established. Obviously, they can be characterized by the specific nature of the other agency or by the benefit that one wishes to achieve from a relationship with them. I have chosen to pursue the former approach. Agencies can be characterized in the most general

sense as public (government related), quasi-public (public or partially public supported but, selfgoverning), and private or independent (sometimes reflecting special interest groups). These three types can be further grouped accordingly as their domain is over the state, the region, or the nation. The following table describes the relationships as follows:

	Public	Quasi-Public	Private
State	A	B	C
Region	D	E	F
Nation	G	H	I

A third dimension could be added to the table indicating the primary or secondary nature of the relationship as it relates to (1) the process of planning and implementation thereof or (2) a source of information for a recipient of information. Essentially A, state public relationships, are primary for our discussion and all others secondary, therefore, I will not further complicate the diagram by adding a third dimension.

A. State - Public Agencies

It is in this category that the most important relations -- the agencies' relationship with the postsecondary institutions and with the legislature--fall. It has often been said that state coordinating boards live in a no man's land between the legislature and the instituions--that, in so doing, they are playing a "no win" game, for to "win" with one side is to "lose" with the other. The agency must develop a position that is respected by both the institutions and the legislature to insure that no matter how unpopular a position the agency takes, it is received with respect for its objectivity and honesty as it relates to the state's needs.

Although this "no man's land" existence very accurately describes the situation in most instances, it implies an adversarial relationship between the agencies and the institutions and the agencies and the legislature. I would suggest that the better position should not be one implying an adversarial nature, but more like a "menage a trois" or a three-side love affair. Although it is very difficult to maintain, such a delicate balance is possible, respecting

the individuality of each element of the relationship and working toward a common good.

While on this romantic theme, it is here that the dangers of incestuous relationships must be mentioned. An incestuous relationship is one between parties related by a degree forbidden by custom or law. This is another way of saying that the state coordinating agency must reflect the needs of the state as indicated by institutional needs, but should not be simultaneously viewed by the legislature as being the lackey of the institutions individually and/or collectively. The same reasoning obviously holds for the converse relationship with the legislature, as it would affect the esteem with which the agency is held in the eyes of the institution subsequently, the cooperation and support that the institutions would provide.

The often overlooked relationship in the state level analysis of the agencies' relationships is the one which is probably most obvious--with the executive office. State coordinating agencies can provide much information and service to the executive office and clearly the agency must be the source to whom the executive office turns for assistance on matters relating to postsecondary education in the state.

Thus, if we return reluctantly to the "no man's land" analogy, it must be extended in dimension--the agency exists in the center of an equilateral triangle--equidistant from the three corners represented by the executive, legislative, and institutional interests. There is not much room to wiggle. To deviate towards one corner is to move further from the others and hence, to lose the respect, support, or influence as the case may be with the other two elements.

The three previous public relationships at the state level are obviously of primary importance. All others are, in essence, of a secondary nature. For your consideration, I will simply list a number of state level public relationships which will be valuable:

(1) State board of education (i.e., elementary/secondary public schools), (2) attorney general's office, (3) licensing and accrediting board, (4) state development office (state planning board), (5) archives and history, (6) regional planning offices, (7) public health department, (8) consumer protection office, and (9) public television system.

B. State Level - Quasi-Public Agencies

At the state level, there exist few quasi-public agencies other than postsecondary education consortia. A close relationship with these consortia can be very helpful for planning purposes, particularly since they provide one of the best means for promoting cooperative ventures between the private and public sectors.

C. State Level - Individual or Private Groups

There are a number of such agencies with whom a cooperative relationship will be beneficial. Again, I will list some of these for your consideration: (1) State NEA affiliate, (2) bar association, (3) medical association, (4) citizens special interest group relating to education, (5) chamber of commerce, (6) organized labor, and (7) media.

D. Regional - Public

In the regional area, there are obviously no public agencies.

E. Regional - Quasi-Public

Of the quasi-public, the agencies for regional compacts are extremely important. By this, of course, I mean SREB, WICHE, etc. I could dwell at great length over the benefits of the SREB relationship, but time does not permit and many of you are members of SREB or a similar agency in your region. For planning purposes, regional agencies can provide comparative data on almost any subject far faster than can the national or federal agencies. They also provide a valuable means for the sharing of programs and facilities among the member states. The sharing of programs either through contract relations or through a no-cost means such as SREB's Academic Common Market has potential benefits that are just now being felt in reducing the pressures for the creation of expensive programs in every state.

F. Regional - Private or Individual

The most important and perhaps only relationship here is with the regional accrediting agency. Since Dr. Millard has already spoken on this point, I will not pursue it other than to emphasize that it is an extremely important, and sometimes delicate, one.

G. National - Public

At the national level, the Office of Education is the obvious primary agency with which relations are established. The breadth and depth of the relationships will depend, on a large measure, on those federal functions that the individual state agency has been assigned. There are many other agencies that can aid a state coordinating agency in its planning and research including NSF, NIH, Department of Labor, Department of Commerce, and others. The congressional delegation is of extreme importance, as are the various committees and their professional staffs.

H. National - Quasi-Public

On the quasi-public organizations at the national level, ECS, the co-sponsor of this project, is the preeminent organization. The value of this organization and the importance of individual relations is self-evident and cannot be too strongly emphasized. I would encourage all of you who have not benefited from the resources of ECS to do so to the fullest extent.

I. National - Private

Although SHEEO is basically private in nature, with its close relationship to ECS, it is almost in the quasi-public category. Most of what I have said about ECS applies equally to SHEEO. Because of its private or individual aspects, it has certain advantages and opportunities not available to ECS and I would likewise encourage you to strengthen your relationship with SHEEO.

There are a whole host of national organizations that are strictly private in the same context that I have been using it up to now. Most of these are located at One Dupont Circle and the list is headed up by ACE, but includes all organizations representing the various types and categories of institutions, disciplines, and professions. Relationships with these agencies will be occasional rather than frequent and the most important aspect of relationships with these agencies is the detailed knowledge of who they are and what services and information they can provide.

Now, another note of warning--beware of internecine relationships--those that can be mutually destructive--this, of course, is almost the opposite of the incestuous note mentioned above. The temptation may arise--perhaps all too frequently--to become involved in a dispute or conflict with an agency, particularly at the state level, whose relationship

is basically secondary in nature; the consequences of this, however, can seriously jeopardize your primary state relationships. These differences can frequently be unavoided, but if entered into, it should be with the conviction that such is necessary for the accomplishment of the primary goals--planning for the best system of postsecondary education possible in the state and the implementation of those plans.